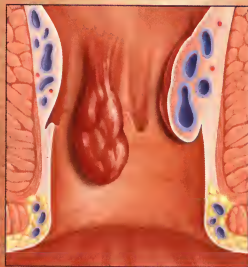
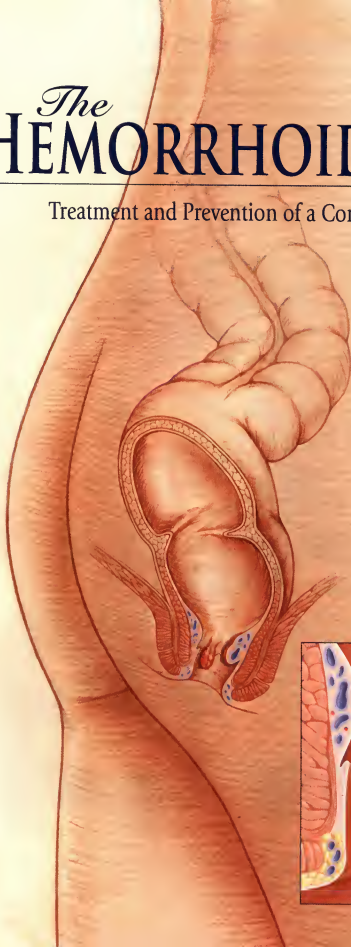


# *The* HEMORRHOID BOOK

Treatment and Prevention of a Common Problem



# A Common Problem

If you have hemorrhoids, you're not alone. They're a very common problem. In fact, hemorrhoid tissues are a natural part of the body. Most of the time you don't notice them as they help during bowel movements. But if these tissues become swollen or inflamed, they can cause uncomfortable symptoms. The good news is that hemorrhoids can be treated so you feel better.

## When Hemorrhoids Swell

Hemorrhoid tissues are a network of blood vessels located in and around the **anal canal** (the last few inches of the rectum). When these veins swell, you can have symptoms such as:

- Pain or a burning sensation
- Bleeding during bowel movements
- Protrusion of tissue from the anus
- Itching around the anus

## What Causes Hemorrhoids?

There's no single cause of hemorrhoids. Most often, though, they are caused by too much pressure on the anal canal. This can be due to:

- Chronic (ongoing) constipation
- Straining during bowel movements
- Diarrhea
- Pregnancy and childbirth
- Sitting too long on the toilet
- Strenuous exercise or heavy lifting
- Aging

Constipation caused by a low-fiber diet can lead to hemorrhoids.



This booklet is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your doctor can diagnose and treat a medical problem.

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# What You Can Do

Hemorrhoids aren't life-threatening. But the symptoms they cause are hard to ignore. Fortunately, there are many treatments that can provide relief right away. Most of these treatments do not involve surgery. You can also learn simple ways to help keep hemorrhoids from returning.

## Evaluation

The first step to feeling better is seeing your healthcare provider for an evaluation. You'll be asked questions about your symptoms and health. You'll also be examined. You may have some tests to make sure your symptoms aren't caused by other problems.



## Treatment

Your treatment will depend on the severity of your symptoms. For many people, a change in diet and bowel habits are enough to relieve the problem. In other cases, the hemorrhoids may need to be removed. Your healthcare provider can explain these options.



## Prevention

Treatment and prevention go hand in hand. That's because measures such as eating a high-fiber diet do more than just ease constipation. They also help prevent hemorrhoids from coming back. Having good bowel habits and getting more exercise will also help.



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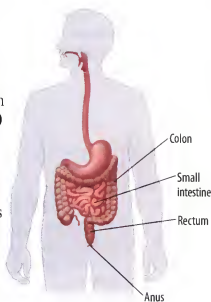
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# Understanding Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoid tissues are “cushions” of blood vessels that swell slightly during bowel movements. Too much pressure on the anal canal can make these tissues remain enlarged and cause symptoms. This can happen to hemorrhoids both inside and outside the anal canal. To diagnose hemorrhoids, your doctor will rule out other problems that can cause symptoms similar to hemorrhoids.

## Normal Hemorrhoid Tissue

Hemorrhoid tissues play an important role in helping your body eliminate waste. Food passes from the stomach through the intestines. The waste (**stool**) then travels through the colon to the rectum. It is stored in the rectum until it's ready to be passed from the anus. During bowel movements, hemorrhoids swell with blood and become slightly larger. This swelling helps protect and cushion the anal canal as stool passes from the body. Once the stool has passed, the tissues stop swelling and return to normal.



## Parts of the Anal Canal

**The rectum** is the last several inches of the colon. This is where stool is stored prior to bowel movements.

**Anal sphincters** are ring-shaped muscles that expand and contract to control the anal opening.

**Internal hemorrhoid tissue** is in the upper area of the anal canal.

**The anus** is the passage between the rectum and the outside of the body.

**External hemorrhoid tissue** lies under the anal skin.

# Problem Hemorrhoids

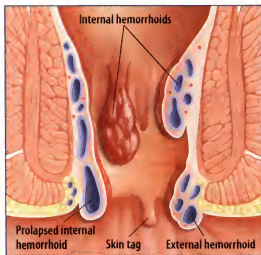
Pressure due to straining or other factors can cause hemorrhoid tissues to remain swollen. When this happens to the hemorrhoid tissues in the anal canal they're called **internal hemorrhoids**. Swollen tissues around the anal opening are called **external hemorrhoids**. Depending on the location, your symptoms can differ.

## Internal Hemorrhoids

Internal hemorrhoids often occur in clusters around the wall of the anal canal. They are usually painless. But they may **prolapse** (protrude out of the anus) due to straining or pressure from hard stool. After the bowel movement is over, they may then **reduce** (return inside the body). Internal hemorrhoids often bleed. They can also discharge mucus.

## External Hemorrhoids

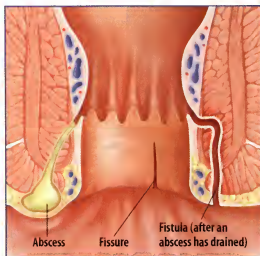
External hemorrhoids are located at the anal opening, just beneath the skin. These tissues rarely cause problems unless they **thrombose** (form a blood clot). When this occurs, a hard, bluish lump may appear. A thrombosed hemorrhoid also causes sudden, severe pain. In time, the clot may go away on its own. This sometimes leaves a "skin tag" of tissue stretched by the clot.



## Other Anal Problems

Below are common problems that can cause symptoms similar to hemorrhoids. Your doctor can explain your treatment options.

- A **fissure** is a small tear or crack in the lining of the anus. It can be caused by hard bowel movements, diarrhea, or inflammation in the rectal area. Fissures can bleed and cause painful bowel movements.
- An **abscess** is an infected gland in the anal canal. The infected area swells and often causes pain.
- A **fistula** is a pathway that may form when an anal abscess drains. The pathway may remain after the abscess is gone. Fistulas are not usually painful. But they can cause drainage where the pathway meets the skin.



# Your Evaluation

To learn more about your symptoms, you'll have an evaluation. This includes a medical history and exam. You may also have tests to help rule out other health problems. After the evaluation, your doctor will discuss the results with you. Together, you can decide on a treatment plan that's best for you.

## Medical History

A medical history helps your doctor learn more about your symptoms and overall health. This often includes questions about your bowel habits and diet. You may also be asked how often you exercise, and whether you take any medications. Be sure to mention if any members of your family have had cancer or polyps of the colon.



## Physical Exam

During a physical exam, you'll be asked to lie on an exam table. You'll then be examined for signs of swollen hemorrhoids and other problems. The exam takes just a few minutes. It is usually not painful.

- **A visual exam** is used to view the outer anal skin.
- **A digital rectal exam** is used to check for hemorrhoids or other problems in the anal canal. It is done using a lubricated gloved finger.
- **An anoscopic exam** is done using a special viewing tube called an anoscope. The scope helps your doctor view the anal canal.

## Pregnancy and Hemorrhoids

Many women develop hemorrhoids during pregnancy and childbirth. This is likely caused by pressure on the pelvis and by hormonal changes. In most cases, the hemorrhoids will eventually go away on their own. In the meantime, talk with your doctor about ways to help relieve your symptoms.

## Grading Hemorrhoids

Based on the physical exam, your doctor may assign a grade to internal hemorrhoids. The grades are based on the severity of your symptoms.

- **Grade I hemorrhoids** do not protrude from the anus. They may bleed, but otherwise cause few symptoms.
- **Grade II hemorrhoids** protrude from the anus during bowel movements. They reduce back into the anal canal when straining stops.
- **Grade III hemorrhoids** protrude on their own or with straining. They do not reduce by themselves, but can be pushed back into place.
- **Grade IV hemorrhoids** protrude and cannot be reduced at all. They can also be painful and may require prompt treatment.

## Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests help make sure your symptoms aren't caused by other problems, such as polyps or colorectal cancer. These tests include a fecal occult blood test, which checks for hidden blood in the stool. You may also have tests to take a closer look at your colon. Some tests are done in your doctor's office. Others are done in a hospital or radiology (x-ray) center. After any of these tests, you'll be able to go home the same day.



### Sigmoidoscopy

Your doctor uses a thin, lighted tube called a sigmoidoscope to view the rectum and lower colon. This test is done in your doctor's office. It takes just a few minutes.



A sigmoidoscope is used to view the lower colon.

### Colonoscopy

Your doctor uses a long, thin, lighted, flexible tube called a colonoscope to view the entire colon. This procedure is usually done in a hospital. Medications help you relax during the test.



A colonoscope is used to view the entire colon.

### Barium Enema

A radiologist injects a liquid barium solution into the colon. The barium acts as a dye that makes the colon easier to see on x-rays. This test is done at a hospital or radiology center.



Barium is used to make the colon appear white on x-rays.

## Your Treatment Plan

After your exam and any tests, your doctor will discuss treatment options with you. In many cases, just making simple changes in your diet and bowel habits are enough to relieve your hemorrhoids. But if your symptoms are severe, your doctor may recommend removing a hemorrhoid. Keep in mind, there are many things you can do on your own to relieve symptoms. Read on to learn more about how self-care can help you.

# Self-Care

When it comes to treating hemorrhoids, nonsurgical treatments are often used first. Follow your doctor's advice about caring for your hemorrhoids at home. Some treatments help relieve symptoms right away. Others involve making changes in your diet and exercise habits. These can help ease constipation and prevent hemorrhoids from coming back.

## Relieving Symptoms

When hemorrhoids are swollen and painful, it's hard to think about anything else. But you don't have to suffer for long. Your doctor may prescribe anti-inflammatory medication to help ease your symptoms. The following tips will also help relieve pain and swelling.

### Take Sitz Baths

Taking a sitz bath means sitting in a few inches of warm bath water. It may sound simple. But soaking for 15 to 20 minutes twice a day can provide welcome relief from painful hemorrhoids. It can also help the area stay clean.



### Develop Good Bowel Habits

Each person's bowel habits are different. So follow your own rhythm. Use the bathroom when you need to. Don't ignore the urge to go. This can lead to constipation, hard stools, and straining. Also, don't read while on the toilet. Sit only as long as needed. Wipe gently with soft, unscented toilet tissue or baby wipes.

### Use Ice Packs

Placing an ice pack on a thrombosed external hemorrhoid can help relieve pain right away. It will also help reduce the blood clot. Use the ice for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Keep a cloth between the ice and your skin to prevent skin damage.

### Use Other Measures

Laxatives and enemas can help ease constipation. But use them only on your doctor's advice. For symptom relief, try using cotton pads soaked in witch hazel. These are available at most drugstores. Over-the-counter hemorrhoid ointments and petroleum jelly can also provide relief.



## Add Fiber to Your Diet

Adding fiber to your diet can help relieve constipation by making stools softer and easier to pass. To increase your fiber intake, your doctor may recommend a **bulking agent**, such as psyllium. This is a high-fiber supplement available at most grocery and drugstores. Eating more fiber-rich foods will also help. There are two types of fiber. Both help keep your bowels healthy:

- **Insoluble fiber** is the main ingredient in bulking agents. It's also found in foods such as wheat bran, whole-grain breads, fresh fruits, and vegetables.
- **Soluble fiber** is found in foods such as oat bran. Although soluble fiber is good for you, it may not ease constipation as much as foods high in insoluble fiber.



## Drink More Water

Along with a high-fiber diet, drinking more water can help ease constipation. This is because insoluble fiber absorbs water, making stools soft and bulky. Be sure to drink plenty of water throughout the day. Drinking fruit juices, such as prune juice or apple juice, can also help prevent constipation.

## Get More Exercise

Regular exercise aids digestion and helps prevent constipation. It's also great for your health. So talk with your doctor about starting an exercise program. Low-impact activities, such as swimming or walking, are good places to start. Take it easy at first. And remember to drink plenty of water when you exercise.

## High-Fiber Foods

High-fiber foods offer many benefits. By making your stools softer, they help heal and prevent swollen hemorrhoids. They may also help reduce the risk of colon and rectal cancer. Best of all, they're usually low in calories and taste great. Here are some examples of fiber-rich foods.

- **Whole grains**, such as wheat bran, corn bran, and brown rice.
- **Vegetables**, especially carrots, broccoli, cabbage, and peas.
- **Fruits**, such as apples, bananas, raisins, peaches, and pears.
- **Nuts and legumes**, especially peanuts, lentils, and kidney beans.

## Easy Ways to Add Fiber

It's not always easy to change your diet. But the tips below offer some simple ways to add more high-fiber foods to your meals.

- Start your day with a high-fiber breakfast. Eat a wheat bran cereal along with a sliced banana. Or, try peanut butter on whole-wheat toast.
- Eat carrot sticks for snacks. They're easy to prepare, taste great, and are low in calories.
- Use whole-grain breads instead of white bread for sandwiches.
- Eat fruits for treats. Try an apple and some raisins instead of a candy bar.

# Removing Hemorrhoids

If your symptoms persist, your doctor may recommend removing the hemorrhoid. This can be done in your doctor's office or at a surgical center. In most cases, no special preparation is needed. Keep in mind that your treatment may differ depending on your symptoms and the location of the hemorrhoid.

## Thrombosed External Hemorrhoids

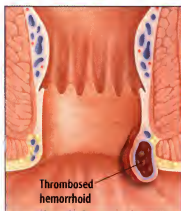
External hemorrhoids are often very painful. That's because the swollen hemorrhoid stretches the sensitive skin around it. To relieve the pain, your doctor may remove the blood clot. This takes just a few minutes. You may need to rest for a few days before returning to work.

### Numbing the Hemorrhoid

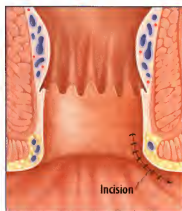
You'll be asked to lie or kneel on a table. The hemorrhoid is then injected with a local anesthetic. This may cause some discomfort for a moment. But within a short time your doctor will be able to remove the hemorrhoid without causing pain.

### Removing the Hemorrhoid

A small incision is made to remove the blood clot. The hemorrhoid may also be removed. The skin is then either closed with sutures or left open to heal on its own. The area around the incision will likely be sore for a few days. But your pain should improve soon after the procedure.



Before treatment, a thrombosed external hemorrhoid causes painful swelling around the anal opening.



Removing the blood clot helps ease pain. The incision may be closed with stitches or left open to heal.

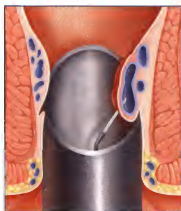
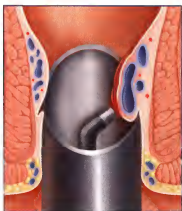
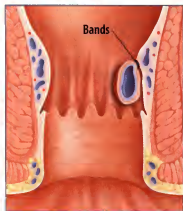
## Risks and Complications

The possible risks and complications of the treatments described on these pages include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Trouble urinating
- Narrowing of the anal canal (very rare)

## Internal Hemorrhoids

You'll be asked to lie or kneel on a table. Your doctor then inserts an anoscope to view the anal canal. To treat the hemorrhoid, your doctor will use one of the methods listed below. Because internal hemorrhoids do not have nerves that sense pain, you won't have too much discomfort. You can often return to your normal routine the same day. If you have many hemorrhoids, you may need repeated treatments.



### Banding

The banding method is done by placing tight elastic bands around the base of the hemorrhoid. This cuts off blood supply to the hemorrhoid, causing it to fall off. This usually takes about a week. The area then heals within a few days.

### Infrared Coagulation

This procedure is done using a small probe that exposes the hemorrhoid to short bursts of infrared light. This seals off the blood vessel, causing it to shrink. Slight bleeding may occur for a few days. The area usually heals within a week or two.

### Sclerotherapy

Sclerotherapy is done by injecting a chemical into the tissue around the hemorrhoid. The chemical causes the hemorrhoid to shrink within a few days. Bleeding usually stops in about 24 hours.

### When to Call Your Doctor

After any of the treatments described on these pages, call your doctor if you have:

- Increasing pain
- Fever or chills
- Persistent bleeding
- Trouble urinating

# Treating Severe Hemorrhoids

For hemorrhoids that cause severe symptoms, your doctor may recommend surgery to remove the hemorrhoid. Your doctor can explain the procedure that will be used. You'll also be told how to get ready for surgery, and what to expect while you recover.

## Risk and Complications

The possible risks and complications of hemorrhoid surgery include:

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Trouble urinating
- Narrowing of the anal canal (very rare)

## Getting Ready for Surgery

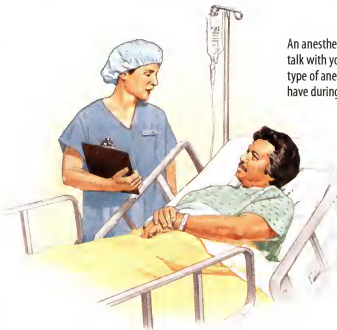
Your surgery will be done at a hospital or surgical center. Be sure to follow all your doctor's guidelines to prepare for surgery.

- Tell your doctor what medications you take. This includes aspirin and ibuprofen. Also mention if you take any herbal remedies or supplements. In some cases, you may need to stop taking them a week or two before surgery.
- Stop smoking.
- Arrange for an adult family member or friend to give you a ride home after the procedure.
- Stop eating and drinking before midnight, the night before your surgery.

## The Day of Surgery

Arrive at the hospital or surgery center on time. You will be asked to sign some forms and change into a patient gown. You'll then be given an IV (intravenous line), which supplies fluids and medication. You may also be given a laxative or enema to clean stool from your rectum. An anesthesiologist will explain the type of anesthesia that will be used to prevent pain during your surgery. You will receive one or more of the following:

- Local anesthesia to numb just the surgical area
- Monitored sedation to make you relaxed and drowsy
- Regional anesthesia to numb specific areas of your body
- General anesthesia to let you sleep during the procedure



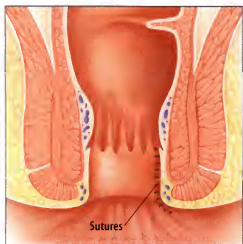
An anesthesiologist will talk with you about the type of anesthesia you'll have during surgery.

## During Surgery

Your doctor will insert an anoscope to view the anal canal. Using surgical tools, the swollen hemorrhoids are then removed. In some cases, the incision is closed with sutures. In other cases, you may have a procedure that closes the incision with staples.

### Hemorrhoidectomy with Sutures

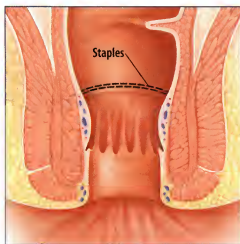
The hemorrhoids are removed using surgical tools, such as a scalpel or cautery (sealing) device. The incision is then closed with sutures. In some cases, the incision may be left partially open. This allows fluid to drain and helps the healing process.



Sutures may be used to close your incision. These help the area heal.

### Stapled Hemorrhoidopexy

This procedure uses a special device to remove a ring of tissue from the anal canal. Removing the tissue cuts off blood supply to the hemorrhoids, causing them to shrink. The tissue ring is then secured with staples. This helps hold the tissue in place.



Staples help prevent tissue in the anal canal from sagging and prolapsing.

## After Surgery

You'll be taken to a recovery area to rest for a while. You can usually go home the same day. But in some cases you may need to remain in the hospital overnight. For a short time after surgery you may have nausea, minor bleeding, and discharge. You'll also likely have some pain. To help you feel better, your doctor will prescribe pain medication. You may also be prescribed medications to help make bowel movements easier.

### When to Call Your Doctor

After surgery, call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Increasing pain
- Persistent bleeding
- Fever or chills
- Inability to move your bowels
- Trouble urinating

# Recovering from Surgery

Once you're back at home, you'll need to take it easy for a few days. To help speed your recovery, follow all your doctor's advice. This means taking care of the surgery site and maintaining good bowel habits. As you feel better, you can begin returning to your normal routine. Just keep in mind it may take a month or two for complete healing.



Reclining on a soft chair or sofa can help you feel better after surgery.

## Manage Pain

It's normal to have some pain after surgery. To help you feel better, your doctor will likely prescribe pain medication. Don't wait for your pain to get bad. Take the medication on time as directed. Be aware that some pain medications can cause constipation. So your doctor may also prescribe a laxative or stool softener. If you have pain or burning after bowel movements, sitz baths (see page 8) can help provide relief.

## Care for the Wound

Proper care for your wound will help speed healing. Your bandage can be removed the day after treatment. From then on, use soft gauze pads or sanitary napkins to control any fluid drainage. For best results, change the pads and your underwear frequently. Wash the area with warm water and mild soap to help the wound stay clean.

## Avoid Straining on the Toilet

You may be nervous about having a bowel movement after surgery. But don't ignore the urge to go. This can lead to constipation and straining on the toilet. For the first few days, you may have minor bleeding or muscle spasms during bowel movements. You can also have swelling that feels like unpassed stool or a hemorrhoid. Call your doctor if you're unable to have a bowel movement within the first few days after surgery.

### Returning to Work

You can return to work when you feel ready. For most people, this takes at least several days. Once you're back on the job, take it easy at first. Avoid heavy lifting or strenuous activity. And be sure to talk to your doctor if you notice any unusual symptoms.

# Preventing Future Problems

Once you've been treated for hemorrhoids, you don't want them to come back. So take steps now to prevent future problems. Keep drinking plenty of fluids and eating high-fiber foods. Maintain good bowel habits. And exercise as often as you can. If needed, be sure to see your doctor for any follow-up visits.



## Stay Active

Regular exercise can help prevent constipation. It's also great for your overall health. So try to be active at least a few times a week. It doesn't really matter what you do. Walking, swimming, tennis — the choice is up to you. For best results, choose an activity you enjoy. This makes you more likely to stick with it. Your doctor can also advise you about an exercise program to suit your needs.

## See Your Doctor

If needed, be sure to see your doctor for follow-up appointments. These help ensure you're healing well. You should also contact your doctor if you have any new or unusual symptoms. During office visits, ask your doctor about regular screening for colon and rectal cancer. These problems are best treated when detected early.



# Feeling Good Again

Anyone can have trouble with hemorrhoids. But you don't have to live with them. By working with your doctor, your hemorrhoids can be treated so you feel good again. You can also take steps to prevent symptoms from coming back. Then it will be easier to enjoy the little things in life without worrying about your hemorrhoids.



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